

Help us name rural Scott County's own 'Great Places'

Mary Ellen Chamberlin, the Riverboat Development Authority grant guru, is encouraging a large turnout at the Figge Museum and River Music Experience in downtown Davenport Wednesday afternoon (Sept. 28) at 5:00 p.m. That's when a panel of evaluators from around the state will be in town to take a look at Davenport's nomination in the "Iowa Great Places" sweepstakes.

The winners in this sweepstakes will be three locations that will be designated "Iowa Great Places." They will thus become eligible for enhanced state funding and will be promoted heavily as tourist destinations. Mary Ellen believes that a big crowd will demonstrate community support and improve Davenport's chances.

With all of the River Renaissance projects completed except the Adler renovation, downtown Davenport is starting to look great. If you receive this paper soon enough and have time to join the crowd Wednesday afternoon, by all means, do! However, if that doesn't suit you, let me suggest another "Iowa Great Place" closer to home.

This "Great Place" isn't big or ostentatious and you won't find large crowds there. Rather, it's quiet, contemplative and beautiful. I'm referring to the Reading Garden at the Scott County Library headquarters in Eldridge. It was dedicated last Saturday in memory of the late Edna Spies, the school teacher and community activist from Dixon who, the dedication plaque reads, "created the Scott County Library for the children." More about that later.

The Reading Garden isn't going to win the state sweepstakes, but in the context of rural Scott County, it is, indeed, one of the "great places." Located just west of the new library headquarters, which itself was transformed from a "big box" grocery store, the garden sanctuary is an amphitheatre of stone benches surrounded by colorful ornamental plants, flowers and large trees.

It is a place, suggested state Sen. Frank Wood in remarks at the dedication, that he would come to get away from it all. Surely others will be able to, as well. Thus we congratulate library director Pam Collins, her boards and staff, and all who preceded them in the library system's first 55 years. They are among the many people who played important roles in forming the library system of which we are the inheritors.

Three of those people were honored posthumously Saturday: Edna Spies, who is long recognized as the library's founder; Verda Shaw, who served as administrative assistant for 30 years under three directors; and Royce Snyder, who delivered books around the county on the bookmobile for 17

Impressions



by Bill Tubbs

years. As was noted in an article in the library's newsletter, "Branching Out," in last week's NSP, a bike rack was dedicated in memory of Verda, who had a special passion for children, and a bench was dedicated in memory of Royce, who got to know the patrons personally and helped them select books.

Fitting tributes all! But there never would have been a library system without Edna. In opening remarks at the dedication, library trustee and NSP co-publisher Linda Tubbs, who knew Edna as a correspondent for *The NSP*, said it was Edna's vision for making books available to school children in rural Scott County – along with her passion and commitment – that made it happen.

Edna's daughter, Beverly Mangravite of Moline, true to her mother's penchant of telling the whole story in detail, added to our understanding by recalling the "how" and "why" for the library in remarks that you can read on page 18A. We thank her for her efforts to make the record complete for the new generations who didn't know.

Meanwhile, we invite readers to nominate their own "great places" in rural Scott County. Size doesn't matter. The only criteria is that it must be a place that is accessible to the general public. Use the form below. Thank you!

My Favorite 'Great Place' in Rural Scott County (& why):

Use other paper as necessary. Include your name, address and phone number. Mail to: "Great Places," c/o The North Scott Press, P.O. Box 200, Eldridge, IA 52748, or e-mail to: btubbs@northscottpress.com.

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